(2) FOREST.

25. Forest Administration with special reference to the Free Pass system and the royal trees standing on registered holdings.

Mr. Aiyappan Pillai Matevan Pillai (Member, Kalkulam Taluk) referred to G. O. No. 2490/F. & M. R., dated the 19th June, 1915, which regulated the grant of free passes for the removal of timber and fuel from registered holdings, and stated that the rules issued thereunder which were promulgated with the object of safeguarding Government property had the effect of interference with the exercise of private rights and caused hardship to the people. Every application for a free pass had to be accompanied by a sketch of the land and the Proverthicar's certificate of registry. Compliance with those provisions of the rules was in itself difficult; but even if the applicant overcame that difficulty and produced the sketch and the certificate, there was considerable delay on the part of the department in the grant of passes. The Member said that he was aware that, in response to the representations made at the previous sessions of the Assembly, the Government had sanctioned the formation of a mixed committee of officials and non-officials to consider and report on the system of free passes, but he was not sanguine that the weight of non-official opinion on that committee would be sufficiently strong to bring about any relaxation on the restrictions imposed by the rules. The Member, therefore, prayed that the free pass system might be dispensed with altogether, and that, if that was not feasible, the watch stations in the plains might be shifted to, and located at, the boundaries of Government forests, and the restrictions laid down by the rules be made applicable solely to timber, fuel, etc., removed past such watch stations.

The Member then dwelt on the subject of royal trees and said that the classification of teak, blackwood, etc., as royal trees was another source of hardship to the people. Teak was not a monopoly of the Government in British India and it was inexplicable why it should be treated otherwise in Travancore. No doubt, in return for the reservation by the Government of their rights over such trees, the owner of a registered holding in which teak and other royal trees stood was entitled to the payment of *kudivila* when such trees were felled either for his own use or on behalf of Government. In the former case, he had to pay one-half of the tariff vaule of the trees, while in the latter case he was entitled only to one-half of the *net* sale proceeds thereof. The distinction, to the Member's mind, looked invidious. Besides, there was considerable delay in the settlement and payment of *kudivila* in cases where the trees were removed on behalf of the Government. The forest officers reposed no confidence in the people and they manifested their distrust by felling all royal trees alike, mature as well as immature, thereby causing loss both to the Government and people. People also sustained loss by the wilful classification, by the forest subordinates, of first class timber removed from registered holdings as timber of the second or third class. Apart from all that, a royal tree was a perpetual menace to the registry holder, as it would, at any time, bring him into conflict with the forest authorities. The Member said that the reservation by the Government of the royalty right over teak and other trees reared by private proprietors was not in accord with well-recognised principles of forest administration, and suggested that owners of registered holdings might be given full rights over the royal trees growing thereon. He added that, in view of its importance, the subject might be referred to the committee appointed for considering and reporting on the Free Pass Rules.

The Member then referred to the difficulties of purchasing timber from the Government depôts and suggested that all timber required for *bona fide* local consumption might be sold from the depôts at a concessional rate of 75 per cent. of the tariff value. He also stated that the Thuckalai Depôt now abolished had been serving the needs of two taluks, *viz.*, Kalkulam and Eraniel, and that, in consequence of its abolition, the people of those taluks had to resort to the Nagercoil Depôt on days of auction and cart the timber purchased therefrom to their houses at heavy transport cost. That being a source of hardship, the Member prayed that the depôt at Thuckalai might be reopened.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

The Member then stated that, under the Standing Orders of Government, ryots were being permitted to collect green manure and agricultural implements from the reserves, etc., but they had no information as to the forest areas in respect of which they might exercise those concessions. The Member, therefore, suggested that a list of such areas with their boundaries clearly specified might be annually published in the Gazette and also hung up at the watch stations.

Dewan's reply.—In regard to the free pass system for the removal of timber and firewood from registered holdings, a Committee has, as you know, been appointed at the instance of Mr. T. Kumara Pillai, Member, Legislative Council. From your speech I gather that you do not seem to have confidence in that Committee. All that I can say is that that Committee consists of four non-official gentlemen who have been elected by the Legislative Council.

Member.—I took objection only to the manner of working of the Committee. I merely wanted that the Committee should work properly.

Dewan.—I do not find any reason why that Committee should not work properly. It is my belief that it will work very well. I shall send all your suggestions for the consideration of the Committee.

In regard to the abolition of the Thuckalai Depôt, I am unable to say why it was abolished, as you have not given me previous notice of your representation on the mater.

Your suggestion that a list of forest reserves, etc., available for the removal of manure leaves and agricultural implements may be published every year in the Gazette and hung up at the various watch stations is good and I shall ask the Conservator to adopt it.

26. Modifications in the Forest Rules and Regulations affecting cardamom ryots.

Mr. S. P. Sultan Ahamad Badrudin Rowther (Member, Devicolam Taluk) spoke about the modifications to be made in the Forest Regulation and Rules so far as they affected the cardamom ryots. He said that, in pursuance of the encouragement given by Dewan Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao, C. I. E. for the development of the cardamom industry, many people had invested large sums of money on that industry, but that they now experienced considerable hardship on account of the working of the Forest Regulation and the Rules issued thereunder by the subordinates of the Forest Department. In support of his statement, the Member said that, although the Government had ordered the issue of free licenses to the owners of cardamom gardens for the grazing of their cattle, the forest officers refused to grant such licenses. Again, whenever the ryots made use of the twigs, *eta* grass, etc., within their registered holdings, the forest officers subjected them to criminal prosecution. The Member next said that no useful purpose would be served by retaining the grass hills on the High Ranges as forest reserves, and that on the other hand it would be very beneficial to the ryots and profitable to the Government if they were assigned to the ryots for constructing buildings, etc. In conclusion, the Member stated that the above grievances were represented to the Dewan while he was touring in the High Ranges in May 1921 and 1922, but that the ryots were extremely disappointed by the orders of the Government contained in G. O. Dis. No. 1355 of 21/Revenue, dated the 20th September, 1921, as also the one dated the 2nd August, 1922. He, therefore, prayed that the grievances mentioned by him might be redressed and suggested that a committee might be appointed to consider the question of disafforesting the Cardamom Hills Reserve.

Dewan's reply.—Government have already issued orders for the grant of free licenses for grazing Travancore cattle in reserves. Orders have also been issued for the assignment of lands within the Cardamom Hills Reserve for the construction of buildings for stores. The disafforestation of the Cardamom Hills Reserve as a whole cannot be allowed. Government do not consider the appointment of a committee, as suggested by you, to be necessary.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly